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ABSTRACT

The situational leadership model identifies four leadership styles--telling, selling, participating, and delegating. This paper discusses the initial findings of a study that examined the role of superintendents in Alabama. The study sought to determine if secondary school principals and local teacher-association representatives differed in their perceptions regarding the leadership styles of their superintendents and the bases of power that the superintendents used. P. Hersey and K. Blanchard's (1982) LEAD-Other instrument was used to measure leadership styles of superintendents as perceived by secondary school principals and teacher-association representatives. A researcher-developed instrument, the Power Base Profile-Superintendents (PBP-S), was used to measure the principals' and teachers' perceptions of the most frequently used power bases of superintendents. Both surveys were mailed to a sample of 135 randomly selected secondary principals and 135 local teacher-association representatives. The overall response rate was approximately 70 percent. The data were analyzed to see if there were significant differences in perceptions of leadership styles and corresponding power bases between the two groups sampled. Findings indicate that superintendents tended to used legitimate power, followed by expert power. They were reluctant to delegate authority to subordinates. A Pearson product-moment-correlation coefficient indicated that the leadership styles and power bases utilized by Alabama superintendents were perceived similarly by the principals and teachers. In addition, there was no difference between males' and females' perceptions regarding leadership styles and power bases. (Contains 1 table, 2 figures, and 10 references.) (LMI)

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A STUDY OF SUPERINTENDENTS' POWER AND LEADERSHIP STYLES AS PERCEIVED BY LOCAL TEACHER ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVES AND SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN ALABAMA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine if secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives differed in their perceptions regarding the leadership styles of superintendents and the bases of power that these educational executives used in their leadership roles. Hersey and Blanchard's LEAD-Other was used to determine leadership styles of superintendents as perceived by secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives. A researcher developed instrument, Power Base Profile - Superintendents (PBP-S) was used to determine the subjects' perceptions of the most frequently used power bases of superintendents. Both surveys were mailed to a sample of 135 randomly selected secondary principals and 135 local teacher association representatives from the same school. Data were analyzed to determine if there were significant differences in perceptions of leadership styles and corresponding power bases between these two groups, secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives. A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient indicated a strong correlation between perceived leadership styles and power bases between these two groups. Results of this study have strong implications for superintendents in terms of adjusting leadership styles and power bases to reflect a collaborative work structure.

INTRODUCTION

In the early development of leadership, several leadership theories were popular. Some of these included the trait theory and the "Great Man" theory (Weber, 1968). Researchers concluded eventually that there was no clear tie between leader's traits and effective leadership. So the pendulum swung toward leader behavior. Two dimensions emerged: task or structure and relationship or people-centered. Situational leadership originated from this relationship between the leader and a particular situation. Situational leadership is three dimensional, using both task and relationship, but adds a third dimension of maturity, or readiness, of the follower. This model forms four leadership styles, which are telling, selling, participating, and delegating. The maturity, or readiness variable, is considered in relation to a follower's maturity to complete a specific task or function (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982).

The motivation to lead might be equated with the need for power. If leaders have a high degree of influence over people, it seems they prefer to be in leadership roles than in subordinate roles (Kipnis, 1976). They must be willing to exercise power over others by developing and enforcing certain sanctions. A leader unable to exercise power over another would have difficulty assuming and maintaining a leadership role. Power can be thought of, according to many definitions, as the means by which to get organizational work accomplished (Russell, 1938, Wrong, 1979, Hicks, 1975). Power bases discussed in this study revolve around French and Raven's five types of power: reward, referent, legitimate, coercive, and expert (French and Raven, 1959).

The role of the powerholder can change from one interaction to another. The literature strongly implies that the role of the powerholder, nor the target is constant (Cartwright, 1959). Teachers and principals have power within their own roles. A superintendent might be unwise to ignore the power formations within an educational organization that have the potential to undermine his/her leadership.

This paper discusses the initial findings from a study of the role of superintendents. The role of the superintendent has gradually evolved from a role of little power and leadership to one of the most powerful positions in public education (Gillard, 1935). Old cultural beliefs, values and traditions are being questioned in the present educational sector. Within the postmodern context, new assumptions on which to base educational behavior are being sought. Leaders can no longer control others to produce positive educational outcomes (Owens, 1991). Conversely, to accomplish tasks in the 21st Century, people must work together by establishing specific procedures for achieving objectives. As the origin of the superintendency evolved, more

responsibility and power had to be shared within school systems due to the discovery that one person, or a group of people, cannot manage the complex problems of school administration alone (Gilland, 1935). The future of educational administration seems to rest on being able to develop respect and concern for others, and the ability to see others as sources of knowledge, creativity, and energy for improving the quality within the organization.

The study that follows is an attempt to determine whether secondary school principals and teacher association representatives differed in their perceptions regarding the leadership styles and power bases of superintendents in the public school systems of Alabama.

METHODOLOGY

Sample

The population of this study involved the principal and local teacher association representative from all secondary schools in the state of Alabama consisting of any grade or combination of grades 9-12. According to the Alabama State Department of Education, there are 170 secondary schools which qualify for this sample. According to Krejcie and Morgan (1979), an adequate sample to represent 170 school districts is 118. Of the 135 mail-outs, which represent 15% over the 118, 93 principals and 90 local teacher association representatives returned completed and usable responses. Table one reveals 67 female teachers, 18 male teachers, and 5 that did not respond to gender. All 79 male and 14 female secondary principals responded to gender. The total percent of returns for principals was 71%. The total percent of returns for teachers was 70%. Based on these figures, there was sufficient participation to establish an appropriate sample of school district principals and teachers.

Table 1

Number and Percentage of Male and Female Respondents in Sample by Principals and Teachers

Participants	Number	Percentage
Principals		
Male	79	84.95
Female	14	15.05
Total	93	
Teachers*		
Male	18	21.18
Female	67	78.82
Total	85	

*Five did not respond to gender

Instrumentation

The "Leadership Effectiveness and Adaptability Description," (LEAD-Other) developed by Hersey and Blanchard was used to measure specific leadership styles of superintendents as perceived by secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives. This instrument measures an individual's perception of another's leadership style, leadership adaptability, and leadership range. This study was only concerned with the perception of leadership style. Leadership style is divided into four quadrants: telling, selling, participating, and delegating. Twelve incidents were described that involved a leader/follower situation. Each situation had four possible actions or behavior that might be taken by a leader. The respondents were to choose the action which most closely describes what behavior their superintendent would use in the situation presented. Permission to purchase and utilize the LEAD-Other was procured from University Associates, Inc.

In scoring the LEAD-Other, the researcher determined the number of responses the respondent gave in each of the four basic leadership quadrants. Normal procedures were used in scoring the LEAD-Other as outlined by Hersey and Blanchard. Scoring tables were used in recording the responses to each of the 12 situations in the LEAD-Other. The purpose was to identify the primary leadership style of the superintendent as perceived by secondary principals and local teacher association representatives. Therefore, the quadrant with the highest total became the perceived primary leadership style. The second research instrument was entitled the "Power Base Profile - Superintendents" (PBP-S). The researcher developed this instrument for identification of a particular power base for superintendents. The PBP-S consisted of six specific scenarios. Respondents were asked to review each scenario and choose one specific action for each one that they perceived their superintendent would implement. Topics of each scenario were constructed around issues facing superintendents that require immediate action. Each was constructed to reflect, as nearly possible, the real situations. Five action responses followed each vignette, and were constructed through the use of language to represent each of the given bases of power. Words and phrases were carefully chosen that would specify each power base. In tallying the power bases chosen by principals and teacher representatives on the PBP-S, each power base was given a numerical code. The code was used for the identification of a power base, but not to demonstrate a particular value. The code receiving the most tallies was perceived as the dominant power base. This instrument was scored utilizing a matrix. The content validity of the PBP-S was established by a panel of three judges. These judges met the following standards: (a) each possessed a doctorate degree in educational administration; (b) each holds or has held a superintendency or assistant superintendency in a public school district; and (c) each

has served as a teacher and a principal in a public school district. Each judge was mailed a packet consisting of a feedback sheet and a PBP-S. They responded to the appropriateness of scenarios to public school superintendents and verified that the action options actually represented the intended base of power for which it stood. Consensus was established on both the appropriateness and the validity. The researcher also attended an administrative class at a local university, The University of North Alabama, to distribute surveys and allow for feedback from students who were currently enrolled in an Ed.S. program in administration.

Procedures

All selected sample subjects were mailed a packet consisting of a cover letter, PBP-S, LEAD-Other, and an information sheet. Self-addressed, stamped envelopes were also enclosed for the return of the information. The cover letter explained the purpose of the study, an explanation of the instruments, with a guarantee of anonymity. The two instruments were numbered identically so that no confusion would result in matching the two together. To preserve anonymity, each principal and teacher respondent were assigned an individual number. Two weeks from the date of the first mailing, a post card was sent requesting participation. Two weeks later, a second follow-up packet was sent which was identical to the first with the exception of a new cover letter. This method continued until a response rate of 71% and 70% was reached for principals and teacher respondents, respectively.

Design and Analyses

Inferential data analyses were conducted. Tables report one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA) to determine whether there were significant differences between principal and teacher perceptions regarding the leadership styles and power bases of Alabama superintendents.

Additionally, a Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to determine whether there were significant relationships between leadership styles and power bases as perceived by secondary school principals and teacher association representatives. To determine if a difference existed relevant to the hypotheses, significance was established at $p < 0.05$. The Statistical Analysis System (SAS Institute, 1987) was used for all data analyses.

RESULTS

In order to determine whether a significant difference existed between the perceptions of secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives regarding the leadership styles of superintendents, a series of one-way ANOVA's were performed for the leadership styles of telling, selling, participating, and delegating. The dependent variable was the score for each leadership style (e.g., telling, selling, participating, and delegating). The independent variables were the position (e.g., principal or teacher). Utilizing the ANOVA results, it was determined that a significant difference did not exist between the perceptions of secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives for the leadership styles of "telling," "selling," and "participating." However, a significant difference did exist between the perceptions of secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives for the leadership style of "delegating."

The perceptions of secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives regarding the type of power base that Alabama superintendents use in educational decision making was also assessed. A one-way ANOVA was performed with the independent variable, position, and the dependent variable, power base. The ANOVA revealed that there was

no significant difference between the perceptions of secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives regarding type of power base used by Alabama superintendents.

Utilizing a Pearson Correlation Coefficient to determine whether a relationship existed between leadership styles and power bases, it was determined that certain leadership styles and power bases are significantly positively or negatively related. Figure one illustrates the following significant positive correlations: "telling," and legitimate power, "telling," and coercive power, "participating," and referent power, "participating," and expert power, and "delegating," and coercive power. Although these relationships are only slight, it is statistically significant. A high negative relationship, -0.36131, existed between the leadership style of "participating," and coercive power. This relationship is statistically significant and has a strong meaning for prediction. Figure two illustrates the following significant negative correlations between leadership styles and power bases: "telling," and referent power, "telling," and expert power, "selling," and coercive power, "participating," and legitimate power, and "delegating," and expert power.

The perceptions of males and females regarding the type of power base that Alabama superintendents use in educational decision making was also addressed. The position of the respondent was not studied in this analysis. A one-way ANOVA was utilized to determine whether a significant difference existed between these two groups. In this study 97 males and 81 females participated. The findings in this study, however, showed no significant relationship between sex and perceptions of power utilized by a leader. Furthermore, no relationship existed between sex and perceptions of leadership styles utilized by a leader.

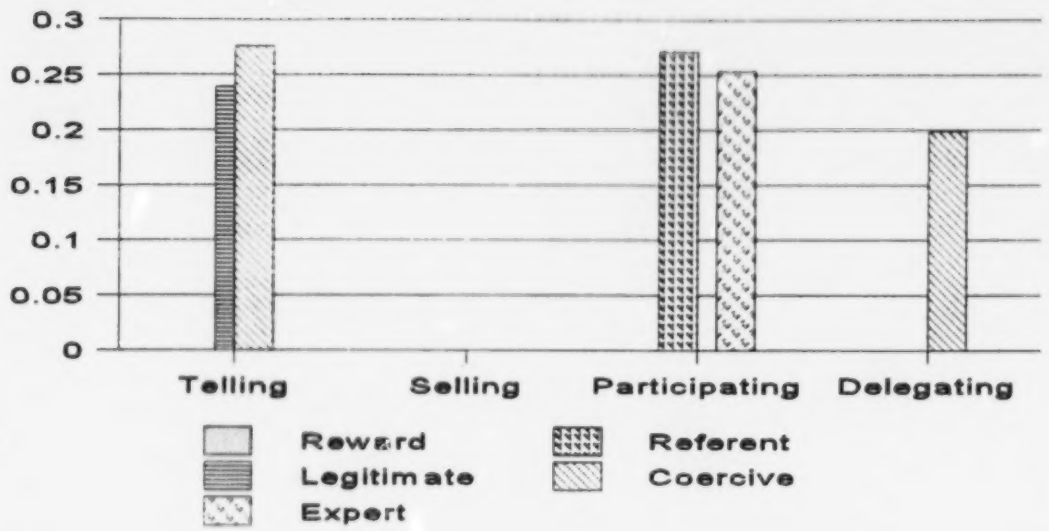

Figure 1. Positive correlations between leadership styles and bases of power

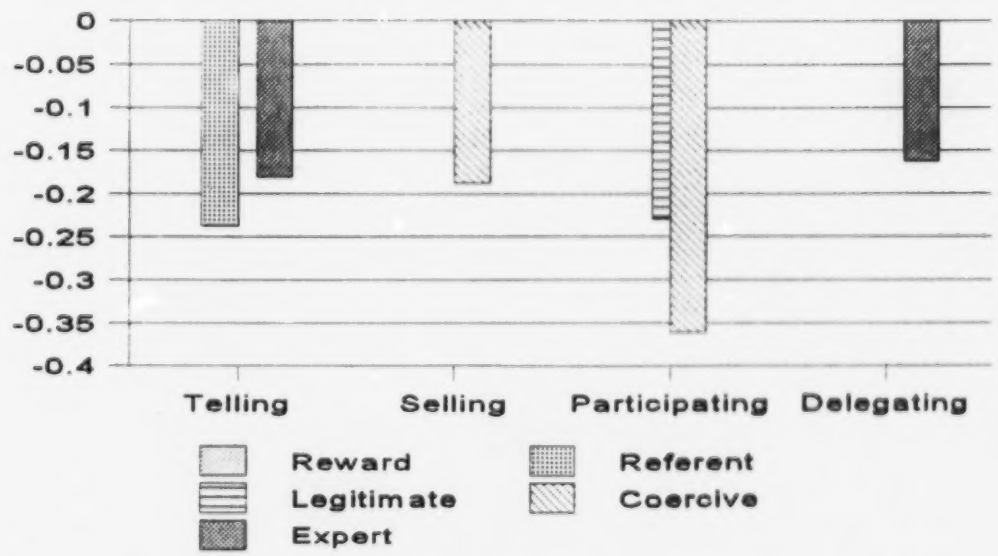

Figure 2. Negative correlations between leadership styles and bases of power.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the difference between the perceptions of secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives regarding the leadership styles and power bases of Alabama superintendents. One-way ANOVA's were used to test for significant differences between the two perceptions. A Pearson Product Correlation Coefficient was used to determine whether a relationship developed between leadership styles and power bases. From the findings of this study, it can be concluded that the leadership style and power bases utilized by Alabama superintendents is similarly perceived by secondary school principals and local teacher association representatives. With a prevalent leadership style of "selling," superintendents tend to exhibit behaviors of high task and high relationship. Presumably, the followers are confident and willing to take responsibility, but are unable or not confident enough to do so.

With a prevalent leadership style of "selling," followed secondly with "telling," superintendents show a reluctance to delegate authority to subordinates. This is exhibited by the low frequency scores by both principals and teachers for the leadership style of "delegating." Statistically, however, teachers perceive superintendents to exhibit more delegating behaviors than secondary principals.

According to the results of this study, Alabama superintendents tend to use legitimate power followed secondly by expert power. There is no difference between male and female's perceptions regarding the leadership styles and power bases of Alabama Superintendents.

IMPLICATIONS

The results, which revealed no significant difference in the perceptions of the use of leadership styles and power bases among males, females, principals, and teachers were revealing. Clear evidence is provided that there is a need for educational leaders to encourage personal self-study and reflection. The reflection should focus on the following:

1. A general understanding of the type of leadership style and power base from which a superintendent is operating will enable the superintendent to function more effectively with subordinates.
2. An awareness of leadership styles and power bases will enable superintendents to adjust their behavior to facilitate needed change and/or strategic direction.
3. Superintendents should "brush-up" on leadership and power theories to more effectively maneuver administrative behavior in times of crises and change, and to provide appropriate leadership under varied situations.
4. A need for more research in comparing different role groups' perceptions as to the leadership and power bases used by superintendents.

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